

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 167
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BELGRADE ALSO FOR USDEL CSCE

E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PINT, PGOV
SUBJECT: SOLOMENTSEV DISCUSSES CONSTITUTIONAL PROBLEMS IN SPEECH TO
RSFSR SUPREME SOVIET

SUMMARY: IN A SPEECH DELIVERED TO THE 5TH
SESSION OF THE RSFSR SUPREME SOVIET ON JULY 20,
POLITBURO CANDIDATE MEMBER AND CHAIRMAN OF THE
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RSFSR COUNCIL OF MINISTERS SOLOMENTSEV LAVISHLY
PRAISED BREZHNEV, DISCUSSED THE DRAFT USSR
CONSTITUTION, AND REPORTED ON THE POLICIES AND
PROBLEMS FACING THE RSFSR. IN A NOTEWORTHY PASSAGE,
HE DESCRIBED THE ADVANTAGES OF HAVING ONE PERSON
HOLD THE TOP PARTY AND STATE POSTS IN LANGUAGE THAT
SEEMED TO ARGUE FOR INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE

PRACTICE. END SUMMARY.

1. ON JULY 20, POLITBURO CANDIDATE MEMBER AND CHAIRMAN OF THE RSFSR COUNCIL OF MINISTERS M. S. SOLOMENTSEV ADDRESSED THE 5TH SESSION OF THE RSFSR SUPREME SOVIET. THE FULL TEXT OF THE SPEECH WAS PUBLISHED THE FOLLOWING DAY IN SOVETSKAYA ROSSIYA; AN ABRIDGED VERSION IN PRAVDA RETAINED MOST OF THE RELEVANT PASSAGES. ITS MOST STRIKING ASPECT WAS EXTENSIVE AND UNUSUALLY LAVISH PRAISE OF BREZHNEV:

-- BREZHNEV IS CREDITED, TOGETHER WITH THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE, WITH "ACCOMPLISHING A TASK ENORMOUS IN ITS SCALE AND SIGNIFICANCE" IN PREPARING THE DRAFT OF A NEW SOVIET CONSTITUTION;

-- THE PEOPLE OF THE RSFSR GREETED BREZHNEV'S ELECTION AS CHAIRMAN OF THE USSR SUPREME SOVIET PRESIDUM "WITH DEEP SATISFACTION AS AN ACTION ANSWERING THE HIGHEST INTERESTS OF THE SOVIET STATE AND SOCIETY. THIS REFLECTS THE GENERAL RECOGNITION OF THE ENORMOUS SERVICES OF LEONID IL'ICH BREZHNEV -- THE MOST AUTHORITATIVE AND RESPECTED LEADER (RUKOVODITEL') OF OUR COUNTRY, THE OUTSTANDING STATESMAN OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST MOVEMENT. HIS REMARKABLE PERSONAL QUALITIES AND SELFLESS LABOR HAVE CONFERRED UPON COMRADE L. I. BREZHNEV THE LOVE AND RESPECT OF ALL THE (SOVIET) PEOPLE. THE NAME OF LEONID LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IL'ICH IS ASSOCIATED IN THE MINDS OF THE SOVIET PEOPLE WITH SUCCESSES IN INTERNAL AND FOREIGN POLICY OF THE PARTY AND THE SOVIET STATE, THE ACHIEVEMENT OF REALIZING THE SOCIAL-ECONOMIC PROGRAMS OF THE CPSU, THE STRENGTHENING OF THE DEFENSE MIGHT OF THE USSR, THE CONSOLIDATION OF PEACE AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY."

-- REFERRING TO THE MAY CC CPSU PLENUM (CF. SOVETSKAYA ROSSIYA FULL TEXT), SOLOMENTSEV NOTED THAT IT "RECOGNIZED AS EXPEDIENT (TSELESOOBRAZNYM) THAT GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE, COMRADE L.I. BREZHNEV SIMULTANEOUSLY OCCUPY THE POST OF CHAIRMAN OF PRESIDUM OF THE USSR SUPREME SOVIET."

-- THEN, IN A NOTEWORTHY PASSAGE, SOLOMENTSEV DECLARED THAT "THE COMBINING BY L.I. BREZHNEV OF WORK ON THE HIGHEST POSTS OF PARTY AND STATE LEADERSHIP OF OUR COUNTRY WILL SERVE THE FURTHER ELEVATION OF THE CONTROLLING AND DIRECTING ROLE OF THE PARTY; THE STRENGTHENING OF THE SOVIET STATE AND GROWTH OF THE AUTHORITY OF SOVIETS; HAVE A BENEFICENT EFFECT ON STRENGTHENING THE INTERNATIONAL POSITIONS OF THE USSR; AND WILL FACILITATE NEW SUCCESSES IN FULFILLING THE DECISIONS OF THE 25TH CPSU CONGRESS, IN THE BUILDING

OF COMMUNISM."

-- FINALLY, IN REVIEWING PAST ACHIEVEMENTS,
SOLOMENTSEV NOTED THAT PROGRESS IN AGRICULTURE WAS
BASED ON DECISIONS OF THE MARCH 1965 CC PLENUM,
WHILE PROGRESS IN ECONOMY AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION
DATES FROM THE OCTOBER 1964 CC PLENUM, THUS ATTRIBUTING
ALL INITIATIVES AND SUCCESSES IN THESE AREAS TO THE
BREZHNEV PERIOD.

3. SOLOMENTSEV DISCUSSED THE DRAFT CONSTITUTION
IN CONVENTIONAL LANGUAGE, REPEATING MUCH OF WHAT
HAS ALREADY BEEN SAID ON THE SUBJECT. HE SINGLED
OUT FOR SPECIAL APPROVAL THE LANGUAGE OF THE CONSTITUTION
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AFFIRMING THE LEADING ROLE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY IN
THE LIFE OF THE STATE, AS WELL AS ITS FORMULATION OF
THE ROLE OF NATIONALITIES, IN ASSURING THE "DEMOCRATIC"
RECONCILIATION OF THE INTERESTS OF THE MULTI-
NATIONAL STATE WITH THE INTERESTS OF INDIVIDUAL NATIONALITIES.

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4. TURNING TO THE PROBLEMS OF THE RSFSR, SOLOMENTSEV STRESSED THE NEED TO IMPROVE CONDITIONS IN THE COUNTRY-SIDE STILL FURTHER, AND TO INCREASE LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION TO OVERCOME "THE EFFECTS OF EXTREMELY UNFAVORABLE WEATHER CONDITIONS OF PAST YEARS." HE ALSO REPORTED THE TABLING OF A RESOLUTION FOR THE CREATION OF A COMMISSION FOR PREPARING A DRAFT OF A NEW RSFSR CONSTITUTION, THE PROJECT TO BE COMPLETED BY THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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END OF THE CURRENT YEAR OR EARLY NEXT YEAR.

5. COMMENT: CLEARLY, THE TWO NOTEWORTHY ASPECTS OF THE SOLOMENTSEV SPEECH WERE HIS UNUSUALLY LAVISH PRAISE OF BREZHNEV AND THE WORDING OF THE PASSAGE REFERRING TO THE ADVANTAGES OF HAVING THE PARTY'S GENERAL SECRETARY ASSUME IN ADDITION THE TOP STATE POST. LIKE SUSLOV IN HIS NOMINATION SPEECH BEFORE THE SUPREME SOVIET, SOLOMENTSEV BEGAN BY TREATING THE ACTION AS AN HONOR CONFERRED ON BREZHNEV FOR HIS SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENTS. BUT HIS DISCUSSION THEN SEEMED TO GO BEYOND THE PERSONALITY OF BREZHNEV IN DESCRIBING THE GENERAL LONG-RANGE ADVANTAGES OF THE PRACTICE, AND THUS SEEMINGLY SUGGESTING THAT IT WAS DESIRABLE AS AN INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATION. SOLOMENTSEV DID NOT GO QUITE AS FAR AS BREZHNEV DID, SPEAKING THE DAY AFTER HIS ELECTION AS CHAIRMAN OF PRESIDUM, WHEN HE REFERRED TO THE PLENUM'S DECISION AS ONE "CONCERNING THE COMBINING OF THE POSTS OF GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE CPSU AND CHAIRMAN OF THE PRESIDUM OF THE USSR SUPREME SOVIET." HOWEVER, HE IS THE FIRST OF THE PARTY LEADERS TO PUT HIMSELF ON RECORD IN LANGUAGE SIGNIFICANTLY CLOSER TO BREZHNEV'S FORMULATION THAN TO THE MUCH MORE LIMITED PERSONAL ENDORSEMENT OF BREZHNEV BY SUSLOV.

6. NEEDLESS TO SAY, THE LONG-RANGE EFFECTS OF NAMING ONE MAN TO THE TOP PARTY AND STATE POSITIONS COULD

WELL BE SIGNIFICANT. ONE OBVIOUS EFFECT COULD BE A
SHIFT IN THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF THE CHAIRMAN
OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS AND THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SUPREME SOVIET
PRESIDIUM. TRADITIONALLY, THE
FORMER HAS POSSESSED REAL POWER THROUGH HIS CONTROL
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OF THE GOVERNMENT APPARAT, WHILE THE LATTER, UNTIL
NOW, HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN A FIGUREHEAD PERFORMING
CEREMONIAL FUNCTIONS. THE LAST INCUMBENT, PODGORNYY,
DREW HIS POWER FROM HIS POSITION AS A FULL MEMBER OF
THE POLITBURO AND NOT FROM HIS POSITION AS SOVIET
"PRESIDENT." IF THE PRACTICE OF NAMING THE PARTY
GENERAL SECRETARY AS HEAD OF STATE WERETO BECOME
INSTITUTIONALIZED, THE LATTER POSITION WOULD OBVIOUSLY
GROW IN PRESTIGE AND REAL AUTHORITY AND COULD IN TIME
SUBORDINATE TO IT THE POSITION OF CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF
MINISTERS. THE HISTORICAL ORIGINS
OF THE SOVIET STATE MAKE A TREND TOWARD AN "IMPERIAL
PRESIDENCY" BOTH POSSIBLE AND CONSISTENT WITH NATIONAL
TRADITION. WE ARE NOT SUGGESTING THAT SOLOMENTSEV'S
SPEECH HERALDS AN IMMEDIATE CHANGE; HOWEVER, IT IS
THE CLEAREST JUSTIFICATION OF THE NEW CONSTITUTIONAL
SITUATION SINCE BREZHNEV ASSUMED PODGORNYY'S POSITION.
INDEED, THERE IS STILL TIME FOR DISCUSSION OF THE
ROLE OF THE PARTY'S GENERAL SECRETARY AS HEAD OF
STATE DURING THE CURRENT "DEBATE" ON THE DRAFT
CONSTITUTION, AND THE POSSIBILITY OF ITS AMENDMENT
BY THE ADDITION OF APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE INCORPORATING
THIS ADDITIONAL EXPRESSION OF THE LEADING ROLE OF THE
PARTY IN GOVERNMENT--ALTHOUGH WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE
THAT SUCH AN AMENDMENT IS BEING PLANNED. TOON

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